

OF SOME ODD PEOPLE AND ODD SIGHTS IN LONDON.

WALK about the streets of London with an observant eye, and amongst other strange sights you will notice many persons who pass you by with so abstracted an air that you feel sure that though their bodies are in London their souls are out of town. They are smiling fantastically—they are making strange gestures—they are muttering to themselves—their minds are far indeed from the turmoil of cabs, and omnibuses, and jostling people amongst whom they are making their way. These are the somnambulists of London. They exist in far greater numbers than is supposed.

By the term somnambulists, I do not of course mean that these people are asleep in the ordinary acceptance of the word, but that they are quite as unconscious of all sights and sounds around them as poor Madame Malibran assumed to be when she stepped over the wooden bridge in the last act of the famous opera, and let the candlestick fall. They are dreaming by daylight, and if you compel their attention by stopping, and addressing them, you would find them for a moment puzzled and disconcerted, just as a sleeper is when he is awakened before his regular time, and pressed back into life. I have more than once seen an illustrious writer and orator, who has recently passed away from amongst us, walking rapidly along the streets, and favouring the little boys with the sonorous periods which, at a later hour,

he was about to pour upon the heads of his Parliamentary antagonists. How the little fellow with the muffins and the bell would stop short in his ringing upon being suddenly informed in a stern way by a casual passer-by, "that the impulses of a wild democracy—and a democracy had its impulses—were as phosphorus on the match, not Phosphorus the morning star." How the man who carried the Dutch clocks about, and was giving notice of his presence by striking the hammer against the bell, desisted from his monotonous amusement on being told "that it was now notorious that he possessed enemies in all the Cabinets of Europe—friends in none!" The orators, and declaimers, and thinkers-aloud of the London streets are very numerous. So long, however, as these outward expressions are merely references to the business of the day, which may really occupy their thoughts, there is not much wonder that it should be so. The sights of London are familiar to them; some particular idea has got possession of their brain, and their attention is absorbed. If they are not retentive of speech, the ideas become words, and fly out to the astonishment of mankind.

These, however, are but the reasonable and natural somnambulists. The irrelevant speechifying apart, most of us walk about at times with the soul's eyes cast inwards; but I rather mean that there is in London a large class of persons who pass through life engaged in a series of imaginary adventures, and who walk about our streets utterly unconscious of what is passing around them. The occasions of questioning people who suffer from this strange fancy are of course not very numerous; but it would probably be found that they did not carry out their dreams to legitimate conclusions, as authors do when they invent the incidents of a novel. They would rather travel round the same small circle of fancies, like tethered cattle. With all Dream-land before them, they are content with half an acre or so for their own use. Given a sensitive disposition—a monotonous occupation which requires no particular effort of attention—a solitary or an unhappy home—and one would expect a London somnambulist as the result. In the country a man could scarcely indulge in this continuous dreaming without becoming absolutely demented: in London the movement and stir, and the sight of the shops, and the constant necessity of avoiding the poles of the omnibuses and carriages are just sufficient to assist a man in keeping his wits at call even though he does not habitually make much use of them. In the neighbourhood of the Law Courts you may constantly see strange clients of this sort whose lives have been one feverish dream of bills and answers, and demurrers and rejoinders. The little old lady who haunts the precincts of the Chancellor's Court at Lincoln's Inn is not a mere delusion, nor the invention of an imaginative writer. You may see her there at her regular times and occasions passing in and out of the archway of Lincoln's Inn which opens upon Chancery Lane, chattering along with a bundle of papers in her hand, just as though she were in high practice, and getting on as a solicitor.

On the whole, perhaps, the Court of Chancery

is more prolific of our London somnambulists than any other of our national institutions. Why should not the court, which does them so much harm, also endeavour to do to its poor suitors a little good? Ever since I have known London, certain houses on the northern side of Snow Hill have been shut up; so have certain others in Stamford Street, just where it abuts upon the Blackfriars Road. The houses are in Chancery; so are many other houses, and blocks of houses, which are scattered about the great town. Until a man has carefully examined them externally, and visited them internally, he has no idea of what urban desolation means. Generally there is a report in the neighbourhood that they are haunted; but the real spectres which hold them as their own, and keep the human race at bay, are old Parchments and Dry Forms, and Equitable Doctrines, and such like. I know it is usual for our learned lawyers in such cases to say that the complaints of the laity on such points are ignorant and inconsiderate. "If we look to the great improvements which have been introduced of late years into the doctrines, as well as the practice, of the Court of Chancery;—if we reflect that it is the guardian of the orphan and the widow;—that it is called upon to exercise a transcendent jurisdiction over trusts, and that it has already, with a graceful obedience to the desires of the nation, pensioned off the Six Clerks and the Masters;—if we take into consideration that where delay occurs—and delay will sometimes occur even in the administration of the jurisdiction of Chancery—the suitors, and not the court, are in fault," &c., &c., &c. I say, that when I hear arguments of this kind propounded by old Law, or rather Equity Lords in the House of Peers,—or printed in fine type in Law Magazines, and so forth,—my thoughts will recur to the old abandoned houses on Snow Hill, in Stamford Street, and elsewhere, as a practical answer to all these alarming denunciations. There are the arguments, and there are the results. At any rate, why should Chancery tenants—for such indeed are the poor suitors—want houses?—and why should Chancery houses want tenants? As an intermediate step, until conclusive justice could be done, why should not these poor people be allowed to keep these poor houses warm? Why should the Chancery houses tumble down, and the Chancery suitors almost perish, for want of lodgings, in the streets? They are amongst the old people, and the old sights of London.

How few outward demonstrations of grief—save amongst professional beggars who assume the semblance of the pauper from interested motives—do you find about the streets of a town which contains a population approaching to something like 3,000,000 of human beings! London laments itself in-doors. There may indeed be seen a few examples of noisy, feminine sorrow in the stern, strong courtyard of the Central Criminal Court, when some trial is going on which keeps the minds of the outsiders in suspense. Such a one—amongst some other painful enough incidents of the like kind—was this. A lad was to be tried—for what precise offence I am not able to say; but at any rate his wretched mother was deluded by one of the vile touters who hang about the

court, to place her confidence in his employer. In order to make up the necessary sum for his defence, she had sold her bed—she had sold or pawned her table and chairs—her clothes, with the exception of the few rags she had on her back—and even to her flat-irons. Still the sum was incomplete—still the touter was inexorable—still the case was about to be called on—and the counsel would not appear, save the fee was there—at least so the agent said. The woman had done all she could—her last bolt was shot—she sat rocking backwards and forwards, feeling that her boy was innocent—(he really was acquitted at a later hour, and upon very conclusive evidence),—but that he certainly would be condemned, because no gentleman was there to take his cause in hand. At this moment a strongly-built, ill-favoured sort of girl—she might have been seventeen years of age—the mourner's daughter, and the prisoner's sister, came in, and passed a few shillings into the mother's hand. No questions were asked as to how she had become possessed of the money; it was handed straightway to the touter, and he disappeared into the body of the court. Sidlons or O'Neil, Rachel or Ristori, might have tasked their marvellous dramatic powers to the utmost, but they could scarcely have simulated the worn look of the mother, or the cool indifference of the daughter, who was rather disposed than not to laugh and joke with the other women about, whilst waiting for the verdict. This also was one of the old sights of London, if we speak of real grief; but the simulation of it is as absurd as the reality is what a man had rather not witness if he cannot be of help.

There are men who go about London, and levy contributions on the charitable, by falling down apparently into fits. They fill their months with some preparation, probably of the nature of soap, in order to produce foam; and really, until you know that the exhibition is a mere trick, it is one of the most appalling nature. One of the professors of this mystery I remember to have seen busy in the exercise of his profession close to the National Gallery. He had chosen the place for his entertainment very happily just in the corner at the western side, where the rails make an angle with the houses, and there is a kind of comfortable little sick-bay, full in the public sight, but yet unprofaned by the public tread. The poor wretch was just getting himself into the full swing of his little exhibition, that is to say, he had fallen or thrown himself down on the ground; he was writhing about in strange agony; he was beating his poor head against the pavement; he was rolling his eyes about in a manner terrible to behold; and he had just succeeded in producing a fine rich foam. There was a crowd about him full of sympathy and sorrow. One good Samaritan was holding up his head, and another had loosed his shirt-collar. Some were for a cab and the hospital: others for letting the poor sufferer lie still until the fit had spent its fury. At this moment a policeman came up, and made his way through the crowd. No sooner had he caught sight of the sufferer, than he denounced him as one of the biggest vagabonds and imposters of London; and true to his instincts as a guardian of the public

peace, desired the false convulsionist instantly "to leave off them games, and move on!" A person who happened casually to be present, suggested that the purposes of public justice would be much better answered if this clever performer were allowed to bring his entertaining and interesting performance to its natural conclusion. Policeman Z 999, happened, for once in a way, to be a man of some little intelligence, and assented to the proposition. The more the man in the sham-fit twisted and writhed about, the more the crowd were delighted; and when he foamed at the mouth with extra energy, as though to vindicate his ailment, they cheered him as they would a favourite performer who had made a good hit. A more ridiculous scene could scarcely be imagined. At last the man condescended to recover his senses, and slunk away in a very sheepish manner indeed, with a mild reproach to the by-standers upon their ignorance of the treatment which ought to be adopted in cases so distressing as his own.*

Let us not linger too long amongst the dismals and the sham-dismals, for really in human life there is no use in "piling up the agony" too high. He must be a cross-grained, morbid sort of curmudgeon who does not see, that with all its trials and troubles, this world contains more blessings than curses. Shall we cast a glance at these Ethiopian Serenaders and jugglers? It is a curious fact, that the Ethiopian Serenader has become hardened into an institution. The trade of the mere street-singer was not a very thriving one, when the sublime thought occurred to some manager, or undertaker of enterprises of this kind, that it would be well to give the London public a taste of "Nigger music." The idea was a prolific one: it has proved one of the most successful hits of our time. For awhile we all of us abandoned our martial, and maritime, and poaching, and sporting, and sentimental melodies, and took to "goin' down de river on de Ohio!" or asking the young ladies of Buffalo if "they couldn't come out to-night?" or bewailing ourselves over the untimely fates of Mary Blane or Lucy Neal. If I remember right, the speculation was originally a Yankee one—a new and a not very illegitimate endeavour to discount the domestic institution in another form. Well—we had these Ethiops of all kinds, and with all varieties of costume; but they always adhered to the particular instruments with which the original black men had first won their way to public favour—the banjo, the guitar, the tambourine, and the bones. The gentleman with the banjo always undertook the more sentimental business; he of the guitar graceful passion, but not without a vein of true feeling; the bearer of the tambourine gave himself up to the madness of the moment; and "bones" was always the merry fellow—the low-comedian of the party. This division of labour has been steadily maintained, now that Ethiopian serenaders perambulate our streets in every direc-

tion, and the exercise of the craft has taken its place amongst the legitimate professions. Were a son of mine to come to me and say, "Father, I have turned the matter over in my mind, and I had rather become an Ethiop than be called to the Bar, as a means of livelihood!" I would not dismiss the youth in a harsh and sudden way from the paternal presence. To be sure, the prizes at the Bar are greater, but there is an earlier competence to be found amongst the serenaders. If an experienced banjo-man, now, would take you up and give you an opening, or if you could marry into the family of a well-established "bones," there might be something in it. I had the curiosity once to invite a troop of these fellows to a public-house, and to endeavour to find out their histories. They were young men with the regular wigs (just like the Bar), and the blackened faces, and the tight white trousers, and wonderful hats. One told me he had been apprenticed to the river; "bones" had a most decided Irish accent; and the tambourine-man had originally been a shoemaker. I forget about the fourth. What a change for the better it must have been from the shoemaker's low stool and monotonous employment, to the full, rich, rollicking life of the London streets! I understood at once how it was that my swart and sable friend had taken the tambourine part. Pent-up Nature would have her way. He was making amends for the cobbler's wax of years. What a difference between the confinement of his limbs on that wretched stool of industry, and his strange antics as he struck his tambourine—now upon his head—now with his hand—now against his knee—and revelled, as it were, in the very madness of Ethiopian ecstasy. I wish that I could remember the exact sum they told me they were able to divide amongst their little band one day with another; but certainly I am not wrong when I say it was considerably more than they could have earned unless they had taken rank amongst the skilled workmen of a good trade. But, then, they had besides a full freedom from restraint, and from the foreman's watchful eye. They could go in and out as they pleased. On race-days at Epsom or Ascot they were there. There was the glorious uncertainty of the thing as well to be taken into account as an additional inducement to a young man of ill-regulated mind. A lad of an adventurous spirit might do worse than join the Ethiopians.

It is to be doubted if the calling of the juggler possesses as many advantages. The training for the profession is so severe that it kills many neophytes, and then they are a rough set. The only test of excellence is bodily strength or agility. He who would attain to anything like social distinction amongst his fellows must be able to knock them all down in succession—or, if knocked down himself, to jump up with a summersault, and land upon his opponent's shoulders. The training for this sort of career begins at a very early age, when the joints are most supple, and the human frame is capable of being twisted into as many shapes as though it were made of gutta-percha. Of course, in the streets, we only see the result of the training when the members of the family of Mark Tubbs resolve themselves into a

* One of these performers, a thirstier soul than the rest, wore a placard round his neck, which became visible as soon as his waistcoat came open, which it did invariably. The placard said: "I am liable to these fits; don't bleed me; give me some brandy-and-water."

pyramid, of which Mr. M. T. is the base and Bobby the apex. Two young gentlemen—the second and third sons—take their stand upon the paternal shoulders, and poor little Robert, when this arrangement is completed, swarms up in some inconceivable way to his proper and exalted position upon the shoulders of his brethren. He has ceased to feel any pride in his exaltation. With his little conjuror's band or fillet round his head, and his flesh-coloured suit of tights very dirty at the knees, and his poor little hollow stomach, and his worn-out pumps, he knows too well the meaning of all this grandeur. Let him make but a false step, or a slip in the course of the performance, and, independently of the risk of breaking his small neck, he knows what he has to expect from the justice of his muscular kinsfolk. Just let them get away from the archway out of public sight, and down by the dead-wall, and our young friend Robert knows well enough that he will be held up by his ear, as though he were a black-and-tan terrier, and passed from foot to foot like a football in the west country upon a summer's evening. This is the result of an unsuccessful performance: but when matters go well, and the treasury is full, Robert knows that his share of the plunder will be confined to a stealthy and childish "pull" at the pot of porter for which he has been despatched to the adjacent public-house (he replaces the froth with his dirty hand), and, possibly, to the greasy paper in which the cooked ham from the ham-and-beef shop has been "fetched." It is certainly very nice to lick this well over—especially when little bits of fat adhere to it—but, still, exertions so violent, and so successful, might have deserved a higher reward.

Let no one imagine that the juggler's or acrobat's triumphs are easily won. It is not so easy as it looks at first sight to keep half-a-dozen balls up in the air at one time, nor to catch all those rings in the horn, nor to do the sword trick, nor to keep the long pole well balanced on the belt whilst your youngest child is sprawling upon his stomach upon the small piece of wood at the top, and staring into the drawing-room windows. It seems as nothing when you see the feat accomplished by passed-masters in the art; but let any Paterfamilias just lie down on his back on the floor, toss his feet up in the air, and then select from amongst his progeny some small thing about two or three years of age, and keep it twisting in the air merely by slightly kicking it as he can touch it with his feet. Nay, any one who had not devoted some little time and attention to the acquisition of the necessary skill would find not a little difficulty in swinging that kind of rope about with which the acrobats clear the ground, and keep a proper area for their performances. It is a curious enough sight, if you can procure admission to the domestic circle of such a professor as Mr. Mark Tubbs. The plan I employed myself was to seek instruction in the art of keeping the balls in the air; but, of course, all that is necessary is to find a colourable excuse for presenting Mr. M. T. with a trifling gratuity. The man I got hold of appeared a very honest fellow; he came from near Sittingbourne; he was not a gipsy, you could tell that from his skin and

his eyes; and he was not a drunkard, that could be inferred in great measure from his own appearance, still more so from that of his wife. The face of a drunkard's wife well-nigh invariably gives you the key to the story. They lived or lodged on a ground-floor on the Surrey side of the Thames, not far distant from the Victoria Theatre. I spent a very delightful evening with the Tubbses. The great idea of the head of the family was to get out with all his belongings to Australia; but it was very strange, that although Mrs. T. evidently disliked that her youngest child should be brought up to the family profession—although she was exceedingly averse to see her second daughter committed to the career of an operadancer, upon which that young lady had already entered; and although her crowning infelicity was that the twins, who, at the moment she was speaking of them, were running after a cat upon the low wall of the court-yard at the back of the house, should take infantine parts in one of the transpontine theatres which I forbear to name,—still she talked of the sacrifices which they must make if they abandoned their native land, and all the associations so dear to their hearts. Poor people—they seemed so grateful that anybody with a decent coat on his back should take an interest in their fortunes—otherwise than by offering them tracts and unctuous advice—that it was with difficulty I could restrain them from giving me a private performance. What young pirates the boys were, to be sure; and although they were only fifteen or sixteen years of age, how awkwardly they would have turned upon you in the street if, swelling with patrician disdain, you had called them "young scoundrels," and threatened them with a touch of the horse-whip. I protest I would as soon have had two of the hunting leopards in the Zoological Gardens let loose upon me about feeding time, with a suggestion from the keeper that I was toothsome and nice. They could walk about on their hands, and keep balls up in the air by merely developing and contracting the inner muscle of the arm, and catching the ball upon it as it fell. They walked round the ledge of the room, which was so narrow that you would scarcely have thought a cat could find a foot-hold upon it. This was the famous feat of which Jackson the pugilist—Lord Byron's tutor—was so proud; but these boys thought nothing of it. Even if you could have hit a stronger blow than these young gentlemen—a fact which I much doubt—you would scarcely have had a chance of touching them, so nimble and agile were they in shifting their ground; and if by a miracle you had touched them, you would have hurt your own knuckles much more than their hard heads. I must not, however, dwell too long upon my recollections of this delightful *soirée*. The end of the tale was tragical enough. Some months afterwards, on calling at Acrobat Lodge, I found no one at home save Mrs. Tubbs, who was with her arms in the wash-tub. Since our pleasant evening she had been relieved from all anxiety upon the subject of the Twins. It appeared that the poor children had caught the measles, without anybody being the wiser. "They seemed ailing and out of sorts," Mrs.

T. said: "but then childern are allays gettin in sarts and out o' sarts, and we didn't think nothink on it." The result was, that the young Thespians attended at their theatre at the usual time to fulfil their engagements. They had to appear as Peace and Plenty, amidst a great display of red-light, at the end of a grand *spectacle*, which was drawing uncommonly well. They did so appear, and scattered their choicest blessings upon the world in general, and this dear, dear England in particular. When they got home, after the conclusion of this act of benevolence, there was no doubt any longer as to their being out of sorts. The measles had been driven in—or had struck in—I really do not know the exact phrase which is used upon such occasions; but the end was, that poor little Peace and Plenty were carried out of Acrobat Lodge next Sunday morning in two little coffins, and slept quietly henceforward side by side—and the cat in the back-yard sate purring on the wall on a space which was tolerably clear of broken glass, and was puzzled to think why the Twins did not come to chase her in the usual way.

I fear that some of our readers may think that I am attaching too much weight to the sorrows and trials of the poor. A man now-a-days is said to be fond of the "slums," whenever he gets out of the stratum in which Lords Frederick and Augustus, and Ladies Blanche and Mildred, are to be found; or out of the groove along which pale scholar-like young Puseyite clergymen quickly slide along to all the beatitudes, and, like dear, good fellows as they are, do not refuse to associate the destinies of wealthy Evelinas with their own, as soon as they are satisfied that the young ladies in question hold correct opinions upon the subject of the rheumatic ailment with which Saint Margaret's favourite pigeon was afflicted. Still, as the world goes, the "slums" are so very populous, and the more blessed and interesting people are so few in number, and have had such numerous biographers, that one may be pardoned for occasionally sparing a word to the sorrows and struggles of those unfortunate persons who have to fight a round for very existence every day of their lives. Never mind—*pauca loquor* *canamus*. Let us get to the corner of St. James's Street upon a Drawing Room day, and if you cannot spend an hour or two there in philosophic investigation, and see odd people and odd sights in abundance, you must be hard indeed to please, and rather wanting in powers of discernment. As a general rule the ladies do not look their best in that more than evening costume, and under the garish light of the sun. They are somewhat—I beg their pardons for the profane suggestion—as the belated masquers whom a very late, or a very early, Londoner occasionally comes across in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden when a masked ball has been held on the previous night. Still there are bright young faces enough to satisfy even the most critical spectators, although in the case of many of the dowagers, one might wish that a little of their ample skirts had been transferred to another portion of their costly habiliments. The prettiest sight is that of the young girl who is

going to be presented, and upon whose white soul the shadows of gold sticks, and chamberlains, and ushers have fallen heavily. She really believes in all these things, and is struck with awe. The drawing-room days, however, are now very different from what they were when I was a lad—not that I therefore wish to wring my hands and lament myself over the tarnished lustre of the British crown. Twenty-five years have told with much effect upon the social arrangements of the country, and the country is all the better for it. Why should the upper-lobby be left in the possession of a few hundred persons, when there are thousands upon thousands whose strong heads have conquered for their country a high place amongst the nations of the world, and for themselves influence and substantial power and wealth? It would have been an ill-day for the Court had it been determined that, under no circumstances, Miss Spillsby should be presented by her illustrious parent, Mrs. Spillsby, "upon the occasion of having purchased her Brussels lace fall," or Mr. Dobbs by Mr. Lobbs "upon his return from the Isle of Wight." If our friend Spillsby is the great pivot upon which the return of the Yorkshire members must always depend; and if Mr. Dobbs employs some thousands of hands in his Welsh Iron Works, it would be somewhat unsafe to offend their not very unpardonable vanity. They have won their way to the top of the tree; they want to pluck a plum or two, and drop it in the parched mouths of their wives and daughters, sick and panting with legends of Ladies Flora, Wilhelmina, &c. &c.; why not? Still, with all this—oh, vanity of vanities!—do not, oh, excellent Mrs. John Smith!—do not turn up your sweet nose in that disdainful way upon your poor fellow-creatures who have gathered together this day to admire and reverence your majesty and grandeur. The game of scorn is a double-wicket business. Your husband, the revered J. S., worked early and late at his mill—whether it was a cotton-mill, or a law-mill, or a money-mill—and there you are; but do not forget, that at the bottom of that sloping street, and within those old brick walls, there are hundreds of ladies, all radiant with diamonds and jewels, even as you are yourself, but who have a clear logical right to think of you as dirt, if your theory be correct. Go, therefore, to the Drawing-Room, and make your curtesy in the most approved fashion; and I trust that our Gracious Sovereign will so far recognise your importance as to send you subsequently an intimation that one of her balls would not be complete without your presence; but be calm, Mrs. Smith, be thankful and calm.

What on earth is that brass band playing away for with such energy in Arlington Street? Surely that cannot be a feature in the festivities of the Court. There has been a marriage there this morning; and although the happy couple whose destinies were united by the art magic of the Very Reverend Somebody, assisted by the Reverend Otherbody, have long since departed for the sylvan shades of Broghill, *en route* for the Continent, these German musicians are of opinion that there are still a few shillings to be blown out of the house.

They are the third band that has been there this morning, and by dint of energy and perseverance they will no doubt carry their point in the long run, for the very housemaids would think it a shame if the musicians were to go unrewarded upon so solemn an occasion as that of Miss Lucy's marriage—she is now Lady Malthop of four hours' standing—a capital match, in which the old Shropshire Stukeleys bartered away that amount of consideration which results from living in the same place against the golden results of

Malthop's Entire. We are not, however, concerned with the marriage—it is to the brass band of Germans that I wished to call a moment's attention. It is a fact that it is a very gainful speculation for the poorer children of the "Fatherland" to unite in these harmonious troops, and to spend a few months amongst us, or even a few years. They are, for the most part, respectable lads, and the sons of respectable people. During their stay amongst us there is little to be said against them—much in their favour. There



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is but one case in my recollection—it occurred the other day—in which a German band has been brought up for annoying a family or neighbourhood after they had been warned to move off. Has anyone ever seen any of these German musicians drunk about the streets? I never have. They have done much to cultivate and refine the national taste for instrumental music, and may fairly say that what we give them is for value received. Their instrumentation is generally good—at times, excellent and faultless. It may, not, perhaps, be sufficiently known how far these wanderers have inoculated us with their fondness for music. You will find them not only about the streets of London—which is their title to mention here—

but in all the watering places and large country towns—nay, in our very villages and country houses—in all tea-gardens, and Tivolis, and dancing places. The humblest dancers in our day can have as good music to dance to as that which regulated the courtly steps of the mistresses and masters of their grandmothers and grandfathers. There is no reason to regret that the old trio of harp, fiddle, and cornopean, which so long constituted the instrumental music of the London streets, is at an end.

The other evening, when it was just dusk, during the inclement season of June, as I was coming home, I fell upon three of the *pifferari* whom you find at Christmas time in such num-

bers in the Piazza di Spagna at Rome, and about the Chiaja of Naples, dancing and grinding away at their little hurdy-gurdies, just as though London in the awful month of June, 1860, was any fitting place for such dirty children of the South. It is clear enough that these poor people never came here on their own account, nor upon the suggestions of their own brains. They must be the human merchandise out of which some Italian slave-dealer looks to make a good profit; and it is to be hoped he will be disappointed. Were they exported direct from Naples? did they grind their way all through Italy, and across the Swiss mountains, and down the Rhine? How did they manage to find money to pay their fares across the Channel? The first supposition is probably the correct one; but really our own Scotch bag-pipers are quite a sufficient affliction for a human society, without any leaven from abroad. It never can be worth the while of the wretched creatures themselves to try this English journey as a commercial adventure like the Germans. The Germans are tradesmen—these people are beggars. It is scarcely advisable to come so far as England from Italy in search of alms. The little Savoyards with the white mice, and the organ-grinders from Parma, have become an institution; it would be useless to say a word about them. They, too, are mainly imported by speculators upon a venture; and oftentimes, if their stories are to be believed, have enough to hear. One night on coming home through the Regent's Park, and on the side of the enclosure by the wooden palings, I saw something which looked at first in the gloom like an overturned cab, or something of that description. On crossing over I found that it was an encampment of little Savoyards, who had piled their organs up so as to give them shelter from the wind, and had clubbed their filth and their warmth, and were lying all together asleep. London was the Prairie to these little travellers from the South. Their story was, that they had not earned money enough in the day to secure them a favourable reception from the *padrone* at night. They were afraid of being beaten if they returned home, and so had preferred taking their rest *al fresco* in the Regent's Park.

The native ballad-singers are at best a dreary set, and not to be encouraged. It is not, however, one of the pleasant sights of London when you see a drab of a woman with an infant at her breast, dragging two wretched children by the hands through the muck and mire of the streets after a day of down-pour, such as we have known of late, and when the pavement, illuminated by the gas-light, is glossy with rain. What a cruel irony it is to hear such a creature shouting out in a husky way—

Through pleasures and palaces, where'er we may roam,
Yet go where we can there is no place like home.

Home, home, sweet home.

Nor is one quite disposed to believe in the genuineness of the destitution of that tidily-dressed man in the rusty but well-brushed suit of black who perambulates the streets, accompanied by his lady and their numerous family—all neatly though

poorly dressed—and the youngest ones with white pinafores of irreproachable cleanliness. He looks like a schoolmaster, and the presumption is that he is in difficulties. It is, however, to be feared that there is something too professional about the manner in which every member of the family, from the parents down to the youngest child, pauses every now and then, pivots about on her or his own heel, and sweeps the windows of the street which they may at that moment happen to be making tuneful with hungry gaze. They know what they are about too well. Again, no one can be said to have made a complete study of the streets of London unless he has mastered the difficult subject of the sweepers, from the dear old lady at the bottom of the Haymarket, who is, I am told, a millionaire, and the Hindu gentleman in St. James's Square, downwards. These two are well-nigh, if not quite, at the top of the profession.

I have only spoken—and quite in a random and disjointed way—of a few of the odd sights and persons which any person of common observation must notice as he walks about the streets of London. It would be a very different tale if I were to ask the reader to accompany me in a little stroll whilst I talked to him of what was passing through the brains of the passers-by—plain, well-dressed men, with nothing very noticeable about them. But now it is John Sadleir fumbling with the cream-jug; now Felice Orsini with a hand-grenade in a side-pocket; now Pullinger on the way to attend the funeral of his relative, whilst the directors of the Union and the Bank-parlour people are talking him over. These are notabilities; but, reader, if you are a person who would rather study human life from realities than from books, keep your eyes open as you walk about the streets of London, and you will find in them odd sights and odd people enough.

GAMMA.